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Maybe the Gate Could Be a Fan

Erin L. Schoenbeck

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, schoenbeckerin@gmail.com

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Maybe the Gate Could Be a Fan

By

Erin Schoenbeck

A THESIS

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Maybe the Gate Could Be a Fan

Erin Schoenbeck, M.F.A.

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Advisor: Aaron Holz

I notice with quiet thrill an individual object or shape such as a railing, an odd pattern in the cement, a handle that does not match the rest, or a surprisingly decorative form intended only for a useful purpose. Choosing a form for its potential function, strange shape or particular color, I filter it through my aesthetic. My mental repetition of the day's stresses is changed into lighthearted wondering. *Maybe that gate I passed could become a beautiful fanned shape, its silhouette in gold and pale green. It could be so tiny its functional life outdoors is transformed into delicate scalloped lace trim. Even just its shadow could be incredibly beautiful.*

First in my imagination and then in my studio, I change elements of my surroundings with drastically different color, mass, weight, repetition, or size. Each assemblage or grouping of different objects I make can be understood as the physical outcome of my mental processes of condensing, simplifying, and altering. Nervous energy is channeled into creating an imagined space, more beautiful and more decorative than reality. Each piece represents a moment of mental excitement first discovered and then reiterated. Using odd crafting or manufacturing materials I investigate how I might physically recreate one of my imaginings and make it understandable to others. Through the work I communicate the contentment and delight I find in manipulating materials to transform ordinary objects.

My groups of objects combine flat areas of color with layered shapes of thin plastic, wood, or fabric exploiting their inherent texture. The original use of an object is often obscured, leaving the viewer to guess its purpose. I choose an object and alter it or add it to something

else to emphasize the oddity of encountering it in the first place. The playful quality of my process is underscored by reproducing large-scale objects from the real world in miniature, like toys. By using humble materials like paper or modeling plastic I emphasize the low aesthetic quality of the objects I choose to make beautiful or decorative. My meticulously painted edges or delicately cut materials embody an anxious tension. Using an unconventional color palette confuses the functional origin of my objects while their fine details and sensual surfaces invite close physical inspection.

I impose my highly controlled aesthetic on reality to rid the unease that comes with the confusion and disarray in my daily surroundings. I embrace the ambiguity of my complicated physical environment by recreating particularly questionable objects. By playing with perspective and using offbeat color and patterned arrangements I show the viewer aspects of my imagined space.





